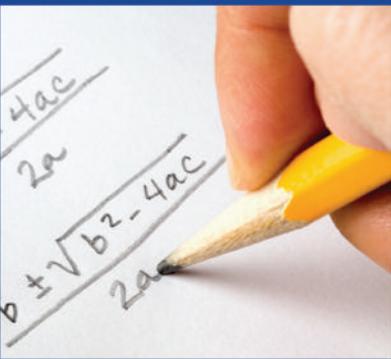




PERFECTING THE FORMULA: Effective Strategies = Educational Success



High-quality Standards and Assessment



Comprehensive Data Systems



Effective Teachers and Leaders



Support for Turnaround Schools

A REPORT FROM THE 2009 GOVERNORS EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

June 14-15, 2009 | Cary, North Carolina



JAMES B HUNT, JR INSTITUTE
for EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP and POLICY



NGA Center for
BEST PRACTICES

INTRODUCTION

The 2009 *Governors Education Symposium* was co-hosted by the James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy and the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices on June 14-15, 2009, in Cary, North Carolina. Vermont Governor Jim Douglas and former North Carolina Governor Jim Hunt served as co-chairs.

This year's *Symposium* took place in the midst of an economic downturn, resulting in tight budgets across the United States. Recognizing the importance of quality education in the long-term economic success of their states, 21 governors came together at a critical time to discuss bold education reforms with U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan. In addition, many governors brought state teams composed of education commissioners, state legislators, education policy advisors, and other individuals to ensure that they could make the most of the information presented at the *Symposium*.

The program focused on how governors can maximize the funds available under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act* (ARRA) to improve education in their states. Along with the energy and insight brought to the table by each of the participating governors, an array of policy experts and researchers contributed to the lively, in-depth discussions of education policy issues currently facing states.

As *Symposium* experts contributed to the discussions with governors, they drew from their own research and policymaking experiences, as well as the body of existing research and current practices both nationally and internationally. This report reflects the discussions that occurred and draws upon briefing materials commissioned for the event.

The following resource experts and current and former governors participated in the discussions:

CURRENT GOVERNORS

Lieutenant Governor Barbara O'Brien, Colorado
Governor Jack Markell, Delaware
Governor Sonny Perdue, Georgia
Governor Felix Camacho, Guam
Governor Mitch Daniels, Indiana
Governor Chet Culver, Iowa
Governor Steve Beshear, Kentucky
Governor Martin O'Malley, Maryland
Governor Deval Patrick, Massachusetts
Governor Jennifer Granholm, Michigan
Governor Tim Pawlenty, Minnesota
Governor Jon Corzine, New Jersey
Governor Beverly Perdue, North Carolina
Governor Brad Henry, Oklahoma
Governor Ed Rendell, Pennsylvania
Governor Don Carcieri, Rhode Island
Governor Jim Douglas, Vermont
Governor Christine Gregoire, Washington
Governor Joe Manchin, West Virginia
Governor Jim Doyle, Wisconsin
Governor John deJongh, Virgin Islands

RESOURCE EXPERTS

Jeanne Burns, Louisiana Office of the Governor and Board of Regents
Andy Calkins, Stupski Foundation
David Conley, Center for Educational Policy Research, University of Oregon
The Honorable Arne Duncan, U.S. Secretary of Education
Beverly Hall, Atlanta Public Schools
Sandi Jacobs, National Council on Teacher Quality
Dane Linn, NGA Center for Best Practices
Judith Rizzo, Hunt Institute
Andrew Rotherham, Education Sector
Warren Simmons, Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University
Joanne Weiss, U.S. Department of Education
Gene Wilhoit, Council of Chief State School Officers

FORMER GOVERNORS

Jim Hunt, James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy
Roy Romer, Educational Testing Services
Bob Wise, Alliance for Excellent Education



"The genius of our system is that much of the power to shape our future has wisely been distributed to the states instead of being confined to Washington. Our best ideas have always come from state and local governments, which are the real hot houses of innovation in our country... Nowhere is this more true than in the field of education."

— U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan

AN UNPRECEDENTED OPPORTUNITY FOR EDUCATION REFORM

Despite the difficult budgetary decisions facing many of the nation's governors, the momentum for bolder, stronger education reform is alive and building. In his keynote address, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan observed that our current economic and political conditions have resulted in a **"perfect storm for reform."** He noted the combination of a president who is passionate about public education, bipartisan leadership on Capitol Hill, "more enlightened union leadership," and an unprecedented level of federal funding has created a "unique, historic, and powerful opportunity to transform education."

In his keynote address, Secretary Duncan spoke of the ARRA, which was passed by Congress in February 2009 and provides an unprecedented \$100 billion in federal funding for education. This funding is tied to four assurances (see box), and the secretary emphasized the importance of working in concert toward all four of the goals. More than \$4 billion of this money has been reserved for the competitive Race to the Top grants, which present the nation's governors with an extraordinary opportunity to make bold reforms in education. In a budget year when most states are struggling just to keep education funding stable, the Race to the Top funds provide governors who are ready to push for innovative education reform with much-needed funding.

At the *Symposium*, Secretary Duncan made an important announcement regarding these funds: **\$350 million of the Race to the Top funds has been earmarked to support the development of high-quality common assessments.** With 46 states and three territories already signed on to the Council of Chief State School Officers and the National Governors Association-led initiative to develop a set of common core standards that are fewer, clearer, and higher, this announcement was greeted enthusiastically by *Symposium* participants.

The Four Assurances of the ARRA

1. Adopt internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace
2. Recruit, develop, retain, and reward effective teachers and principals
3. Turn around low-performing schools
4. Build data systems that measure student success and inform teachers and principals how they can improve their practices

COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION REFORM: THE FOUR ASSURANCES OF THE ARRA

The *Symposium* agenda was designed around the four assurances of the ARRA. These assurances represent the essential elements of an integrated system for education reform. As governors reconvened the morning after Secretary Duncan's keynote address, the conversation turned to how governors and states can work to ensure they are meeting these goals. Secretary Duncan emphasized in his remarks and throughout the sessions that **these four priorities for reform must not be seen as stand-alone goals, but rather as individual threads that must be woven together as part of an integrated plan for education reform.** The discussion throughout the sessions at this year's *Symposium* illustrated the interconnectedness of the assurances. To this point, Joanne Weiss of the U.S. Department of Education made it clear that **the states that will receive additional funding under the Race to the Top grants must be making progress on all four assurances.**

STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENTS

There is universal recognition that in today's global economy, students must be internationally competitive. However, research has revealed stark differences between the world-class expectations in top-performing nations and standards in most U.S. states.¹ In recognition of the need for higher-quality, streamlined standards across the U.S., 46 states and three territories, including those of the 21 governors in attendance at the *Symposium*, have committed to the Common Core State Standards Initiative. Dane Linn, director of the Education Division at the NGA Center for Best Practices, explained to governors that the goal of the initiative is to draw from research to "inform the development of a common core set of standards that meet the essential criteria: **fewer, clearer, higher, and internationally benchmarked.**" This process will draw on evidence of what it means to be college and workforce-ready and will lead to the development and voluntary adoption of a common core of state standards in English language arts and mathematics for grades K-12.²

The development of the common core standards is entirely state-led. The Standards Development Work Group composed of content experts from Achieve, ACT, and the College Board has completed an initial draft of the college and career-readiness standards. This draft is currently circulating among states and an expert Feedback Group.³ The Validation Committee, composed of independent experts selected by governors and chief state school officers, will review the process and substance of the college and career-readiness and K-12 standards to ensure they are research and evidence-based. This group will also validate state adoption of the standards.⁴ Once the college and career-readiness standards are approved, K-12 standards in English-language arts and mathematics will be developed. These grade-level standards are to be released for public feedback in December 2009.



Resource expert David Conley, First Lady Joann Camacho, and Governor Felix Camacho, Guam

Twenty of the participating governors had already signed onto the initiative prior to the *Symposium*, and Governor Felix Camacho of Guam signed on immediately following the event. With the governors in agreement on the importance of developing a set of high-quality, streamlined standards, their discussion centered on the process and potential outcomes of the initiative:

- **States are demanding rigorous standards.** The most common concern voiced by governors was that the consensus process often used in the development of state standards documents leads to the inclusion of too many standards and insufficient rigor. Some governors feared that would be the case with the common standards initiative. Governors made it clear that they would not lower their current standards to remain in the partnership. Gene Wilhoit, executive director of the Council of Chief State School Officers, assured governors that the initiative will result in higher-quality, streamlined standards. The initiative will guard against the "ballooning effect" that often results in the well-documented observation that state standards are "a mile wide and an inch deep."

States spend up to five times more for tests that are customized compared to off-the-shelf tests.

- **States are likely to face political pushback.** Though governors are seeking high standards, many states will face challenges as they move to adopt a common set. A prevailing fear is that with higher standards, fewer students and schools will initially meet the new expectations, leading to the identification of more failing schools. In response, Secretary Duncan acknowledged that the federal accountability framework would need to be reviewed to avoid creating a disincentive for raising standards and to accommodate states that adopt and implement the new, higher standards. While it may be politically challenging to send a message to the public that many schools are failing, sharing accurate information on student achievement will help students, parents, teachers, and policymakers know where students truly stand.
- **Stakeholders must be involved at all stages.** Governors were generally in agreement that it will be important to fully invest in or engage teachers and other stakeholders. Rhode Island Governor Don Carcieri and Vermont Governor Jim Douglas spoke of the importance of involving teachers in the development of the new standards and assessments. This was an important element of their success in the development of the New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP).
- **Well-planned implementation processes are necessary for success.** Standards alone will not ensure student success. Wilhoit cautioned that higher standards will not be effective if teachers and local education authorities are not prepared to use them. High-quality standards represent the knowledge and skills that states want students to acquire, but this goal cannot be realized without an implementation system that includes curriculum, instructional tools and materials, formative and summative assessments, student supports, and teacher preparation and professional development that are aligned with the new standards.

The development of a common set of standards is an important step towards improving education and closing achievement gaps; however, the second phase of the initiative—creating common assessments aligned to those core standards—is equally, if not more, important. Not only do well-crafted, state-of-the-art assessments demonstrate whether students are meeting the new standards, they also play a critical role in determining what gets taught. Most educators and researchers agree that instruction is often driven by what teachers expect will be on the state test. Adopting a new set of fewer, clearer, and higher standards is unlikely to lead to an increase in student achievement if it is not paired with a high-quality, aligned set of assessments. As Secretary Duncan pointed out, **"This first step is huge, but if all we do is the standards piece—if the assessments don't follow the standards—we're really missing the boat."**

At the most practical level, state assessments help policymakers determine whether their education investments result in academic gains.⁵ As part of the provisions under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), states are required to test in grades three through eight, as well as in high school. States spend up to five times more for tests that are customized for their individual states compared to off-the-shelf, standardized tests.⁶ However, despite this investment, **half of the state tests administered each year are poorly aligned with their own state standards.**⁷



Governor Jim Douglas, Vermont

The Evolution of State Assessments⁸

Prior to 1965	At the local level, some schools and school districts purchased elementary and secondary school achievement tests from publishers to compare student performance with a representative national sample of students, though there were no requirements to do so.
Late 1960s - 1970s	Following the passage of the <i>Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965</i> (ESEA), policymakers in several states began to require statewide testing programs to ensure that students had “minimum competencies” in core subjects. This “minimum-competency” movement gained momentum in more states in the 1970s.
1980s - 1990s	With the release of <i>A Nation At Risk</i> in 1983, policymakers at the federal level began to demand evidence of a return on their investments in education. A new standards-based reform movement emerged with a national goal that students demonstrate competency in core subjects in grades 4, 8, and 12. The 1994 reauthorization of the ESEA, known as the <i>Improving America’s Schools Act</i> (IASA), required every state to implement standards and tests in reading and math at three grade levels. The majority of the tests that were implemented as a result of the IASA were designed to measure student mastery of the state’s standards, as opposed to how well they performed compared to other students nationally.
2001 - present	In 2001, the ESEA was reauthorized as <i>No Child Left Behind</i> (NCLB). Under NCLB, states are required to test students in reading and math in grades 3 through 8 and in one grade in high school. In addition, they are required to test students in science in a minimum of one elementary, one middle, and one high school grade. Today, “more students are tested more often than at any time in the nation’s history and the stakes are far higher.”

While standards-based reform and accountability are at the heart of many discussions surrounding education reform, Dr. David Conley of the University of Oregon explained the notion of having standards and assessments is a fairly recent development (see box). In the current era of NCLB, the majority of our assessments are designed to test content knowledge, and they do so with varying success. Yet Conley believes that we are now on the threshold of a new generation of assessments that will allow states to measure complex thinking skills in addition to content knowledge.

Conley noted that when looking at assessments in the U.S., as compared to those in high-performing countries, there is a stark difference in design. In the U.S., the focus has been on developing **reliable** assessments. An assessment is considered reliable if it consistently produces the same result when used repeatedly to measure the same thing. Because reliability is easy to achieve through multiple choice-style tests, these types of tests have dominated the field of state assessments. Once developed, multiple choice assessments are difficult to displace because they are inexpensive and take relatively little time to administer and score. Content standards that are not easily assessed by a multiple choice format are thus often left off state assessments entirely, leading to a misalignment between state content standards and state assessments.

In contrast, assessments in high-performing countries are developed with a greater focus on **validity**, meaning that they measure what they are intended to measure. To achieve valid measures of student learning, these countries often include open-ended questions and other forms of performance assessments that capture students’ thought processes and skill usage better than responses to multiple choice questions. According to Conley, states need to move toward systems of assessments that are designed not just to assess content knowledge, but to measure complex student learning processes and application.

As states strive to develop and adopt standards that are fewer, clearer, and higher, as well as assessments that are aligned to those standards, it is important for states to continue to view these as elements of a larger, **integrated** system.⁹ To fully support student learning, governors need to ensure that the goals set through standards and assessments are accompanied by systems for supporting teachers and students, transforming low-performing schools, and a robust data system that is used to make informed decisions and track progress.

TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS

Teachers are the most important school-based factor in improving student achievement. The research is clear on the difference an effective teacher can make in determining the academic success of students. In an analysis of student performance using value-added data from the *Tennessee Value-Added Assessment System*, researchers William Sanders and June Rivers found that an 8-year-old student at the 50th percentile with consistently effective teachers—those in the top 20 percent—was likely to be at the 90th percentile three years later. In comparison, a similar low-performing student with consistently *ineffective* teachers—those in the bottom 20 percent—was likely to be in the 37th percentile three years later, meaning that student would actually lose ground over a three-year period. The result was a dramatic difference of 53 percentile points between students with the same starting point, based on the quality of their teachers.¹⁰

While there is little disagreement that a better-qualified teacher produces higher student achievement, most school, district, and state policies do not address how to measure teacher effectiveness. In the 2009 report *The Widget Effect*, The New Teacher Project examined 12 districts in four states and found that in nine of the 12 districts, teacher performance was only taken into account in decisions around remediation and dismissal.¹¹ Only one district took teacher performance into consideration when hiring and placing teachers. None of the 12 districts considered teacher performance in decisions regarding recruitment, professional development, retention, or layoffs.¹²

The National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ) advocates for reforms in a broad range of teacher policies at the federal, state, and local levels in order to increase the number of effective teachers. Sandi Jacobs from NCTQ identified several key problems with current state policies around teacher effectiveness:

- Almost all teachers are rated highly effective, even in schools that are deemed to be highly ineffective.
- Teacher licensure policies and evaluation policies are not connected.
- Tenure policies are most often linked to years of experience, not evaluation policies.
- Blanket retention policies work to retain effective and ineffective teachers equally.
- Many states include pay raises for advanced degrees, despite research which shows that on average, “master’s degrees in education bear no relation to student achievement.”¹³ (A notable exception: master’s degrees in math and science have been linked to improved student achievement in those subjects.)

Addressing these issues presents many challenges, but the resource experts suggested that governors begin by considering two cost-effective and quick strategies for improving teacher effectiveness in their states:

- 1. Require teacher candidates to take a basic skills test (8th grade-level reading and math) before entering a teacher preparation program.** While most states require a basic skills test as a requirement for licensure, few require that this test be taken before candidates enter teacher preparation programs. Ensuring that teachers have these skills before entering the program will reduce the number of candidates using their program time to take remedial courses and therefore allow for more time in the pedagogy and content courses that are key to success in the classroom.
- 2. Revisit state licensure requirements to ensure that teacher preparation programs are in alignment with them.** When Louisiana began examining its state licensure structure, research showed the state was using a course-driven and credit-accumulation structure, as opposed to a content and standards-driven structure. By refocusing on content knowledge and standards, Louisiana was able to give the universities more flexibility, which, in turn, allowed them to better align their teacher preparation programs with the state content standards.



Jim Hunt, Hunt Institute and Gene Wilhoit, CCSSO



Governor Beverly Perdue, North Carolina

Another area where states can work to improve their policies around teacher effectiveness is through the use of data. A comprehensive state data system can provide value-added data that can be considered among the criteria used to determine a teacher's effectiveness. While 19 states currently have data systems with the capacity to link individual teachers to student growth, only two use value-added data to assess teacher effectiveness.¹⁴

One state that has made great strides in using data is Louisiana. Jeanne Burns from the Louisiana Governor's

Office and Board of Regents shared her state's model for connecting teacher performance back to teacher preparation programs. The *Louisiana Teacher Preparation Value-Added Model* draws on student achievement data from all school districts in the state, as well as from all 22 public and private university-based teacher preparation programs. The *Model* also includes two non-university training programs: The New Teacher Project and the Louisiana Resource Center for Educators. Thus far, results from the *Model* show that 40 to 50 percent of Louisiana's teacher preparation programs are producing new teachers whose effectiveness is comparable to that of more experienced teachers.

Discussions throughout the *Symposium* and across the sessions emphasized the important role teachers play in any type of education reform and the importance of involving and engaging teachers in these reforms. Governor Jack Markell of Delaware summed up the importance of teachers during the discussion around standards, observing, "It is easy to lose sight of the importance of human beings in the classroom. We all want higher standards, and in the end, it really does come down to that teacher in the classroom."

Louisiana Teacher Preparation Value-Added Model

The *Value-Added Model* was created in 2003 just as Louisiana was recovering from Hurricane Katrina. Education leaders in the state credit this crisis with creating a sense of urgency to address the problems in the public education system.

The Louisiana Board of Regents contracted with Dr. George Noell of Louisiana State University and A&M College to examine the achievement of fourth through ninth-grade students in 10 school districts. These data were linked to information about the student's teacher, specifically whether that teacher was new to the profession and where he or she received his or her training. This model allowed for teacher performance comparisons of new graduates and veteran teachers. Although the initial results were not made public, they were shared with universities, their governing boards, and the Louisiana legislature. The sharing of these data helped to build the case for expanding the pilot to the entire state and also allowed these groups to share their input on the reliability of the *Model*.

From 2005 to 2006, the Board of Regents expanded the pilot to incorporate data from all 68 school districts in the state. As with the pilot model, the expanded model examined student achievement in grades 4 through 9, and compared the performance of students taught by experienced teachers—those with three or more years of experience—with the performance of students with newer teachers who had one to two years of experience. Names of the universities were not linked to the data until after the full pilot year, to ensure that all stakeholder groups were comfortable with the final instrument.

The development of the *Model* would have been impossible without the comprehensive data system within the Louisiana Department of Education. Initially, Louisiana's development of the *Model* was slow because it did not have the capacity to provide detailed, individual-level data on both teachers and students. The data system also needed the capacity to link students to specific teachers over a number of years and link teachers to preparation programs. With the assistance of a Title II grant from the U.S. Department of Education, Louisiana built a data-rich system that incorporates student and school demographic information, reading performance data, and a broad range of student achievement data.



Governor John deJongh, U.S. Virgin Islands



Governor Don Carcieri, Rhode Island

SUPPORT FOR LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

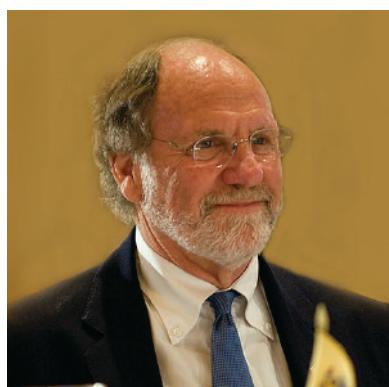
Current projections show that by the end of this decade, approximately five percent of all U.S. public schools will be identified as chronic failures in need of restructuring under NCLB. Efforts to devise and implement accountability systems have helped to identify the magnitude of this challenge; however, the number of chronically low-performing schools continues to grow. Despite the numbers, there are few examples of full-scale, statewide efforts to turn around low-performing schools; most success stories thus far have occurred at the district level. As states work to address this growing challenge, it will be important to look for scalable reforms that have proven successful in districts across the U.S.

Andy Calkins, program officer at the Stupski Foundation and co-author of *The Turnaround Challenge*, explained to governors that while states may have improved their systems for identifying low-performing schools, several incorrect assumptions often underlie current efforts at turnaround:

- A “repair person” with a “toolkit” can go to the school and “fix” its problems.
- Problems can be “fixed” with a new curriculum or professional development.
- The problems lie in the school only, not in the systems within which they operate.



Governor Christine Gregoire, Washington



Governor Jon Corzine, New Jersey



Governor Deval Patrick, Massachusetts

According to Calkins, policymakers must recognize that traditional school improvement strategies will *not* work in schools where learning is not taking place. Policymakers must now develop strategies that incorporate changes in operating conditions around people, time, money, and program design.¹⁵ The table below provides a comparison between the marginal changes used in traditional school improvement and the changes in operating conditions that are necessary for comprehensive, lasting turnaround.

Important Elements of Turnaround Design ¹⁶		
Operating Condition	Traditional School Improvement	Comprehensive Turnaround
Program	Improve quality of current strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consulting support • Curriculum, instruction, assessment, tools, and strategies 	Re-invent program and entire school approach to suit needs of high-challenge enrollments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherent, whole-school plan • Deep commitment and strategies to address impacts of poverty on students: enabling their readiness to learn • Focus on the individualization of learning through transformed instructional approaches completely integrated with assessment
People	Help current staff perform at a higher level <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff development, coaching • Leadership development 	Establish professional norms for human capital management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turnaround leaders have the authority and resources to staff the school as needed to fulfill the turnaround plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Incentives to recruit highly capable teachers – Flexibility on staff hiring, allocation, work rules – Flexibility, time to make staff development coherent
Money	No real impact on budgetary authority in most cases <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional resources (usually staff development) 	Authority to reallocate budget to support turnaround plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to reallocate budget strategically • Sufficient additional resources to support the plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Pay for extra time – Pay for incentives – Pay for partner support
Time	Some initiatives adjust schedule within same-length school day and year <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Block scheduling • Extra common planning time for educators 	Expand school day and year and reinvent schedule to implement turnaround plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly more time for teacher collaborating, instruction • Review and re-engineering of schedule to support plan

Dr. Beverly Hall, superintendent of Atlanta Public Schools, provided governors with insight into the role of states in supporting districts that are trying to turn around low-performing schools. Dr. Hall shared her experiences in turning around schools in both Newark (NJ) and Atlanta (GA) and said she believes that if leaders stay the course based on research and best practices, they can successfully change outcomes for children.

Several key themes emerged from this conversation regarding successful turnaround for low-performing schools:

- **Sustainable school leadership is vital to the success of school transformation.** Good teachers won't stay in schools without good principals. Similarly, sustainable leadership at the district level is also important. When Dr. Hall arrived in Atlanta, she was the fifth superintendent in four years and believes that "if you don't fix the problem of sustainability for leadership, nothing will change."
- **States play an important role in enabling districts to address low-performing schools and leverage resources.** State and district leaders can work together to identify state policies that may inadvertently thwart local turnaround efforts, weed out those that do, and institute policies that support local efforts.

- **Successful school districts partner with outside organizations and community groups.** Programs like *Communities in Schools* can provide students with access to support personnel who can link families to health care services, as well as provide support for Saturday academies, recreational activities, and family support programs.
- **Turning around low-performing schools requires careful strategy and an extended period of time.** New policies and programs need to be deliberate and systematic and to build in enough time to overcome implementation hurdles before they are expected to produce outcomes.
- **Closing or restructuring a low-performing school will often cause significant pushback from the local community.** This can be addressed by building relationships with parents and other community members and keeping teachers informed of and involved in changes so that they will buy in to the reforms.



Governor Jennifer Granholm, Michigan



Governor Chet Culver, Iowa and Governor Mitch Daniels, Indiana

DATA SYSTEMS

Governors discussed the importance of collecting data and developing state and local capacity to use data to drive reform throughout all sessions at this year's *Symposium*. Although states have made impressive progress on implementing the 10 essential elements of a statewide data system as defined by the Data Quality Campaign (see box), too few have taken the necessary steps to ensure that the information produced by these data systems is harnessed to inform and improve the processes and outcomes of educational efforts.¹⁷ Developing these systems and linkages **requires political leadership; a single, shared, statewide vision for the state's human capital development system; interagency collaboration; and a strategic plan for developing new data governance and management systems.** The ARRA provides a unique opportunity to galvanize political focus and action while also providing critical funding to make these changes possible.

Whether connecting teacher performance data to teacher preparation programs as in Louisiana, or identifying schools that are likely to need turnaround support, quality data systems and the capacity to use them effectively are key to meeting all of the assurances of the ARRA. Aimee Guidera, executive director of the Data Quality Campaign, emphasized that governors need not start from scratch, but can draw upon successful state models. Collaboration among states, as well as interagency collaboration within individual states, is important as states continue thinking about P-20 data systems.

10 Essential Elements of a State Longitudinal Data System¹⁸

1. A unique statewide student identifier that connects student data across key databases and across years
2. Student-level enrollment, demographic, and program participation information
3. The ability to match individual students' test records from year-to-year to measure academic growth
4. Information on untested students and the reasons they were not tested
5. A teacher identifier system with the ability to match teachers to students
6. Student-level transcript information, including information on courses completed and grades earned
7. Student-level college readiness test scores
8. Student-level graduation and dropout data
9. The ability to match student records between the P-12 and higher education systems
10. A state data audit system assessing data quality, validity, and reliability

CONCLUSION

Governors have an unprecedented opportunity through the ARRA to make bold reforms in education. With momentum building around the four assurances and the Race to the Top funds, governors may want to consider the following as they move forward with their education reform agendas:

- 1. The four assurances do not exist in a vacuum.** To improve educational outcomes for students in the U.S. and qualify for RTT funding, governors will need to work on all four assurances simultaneously. The issues discussed in this report are all interconnected, and policies which may seem likely to improve one area could have unintended consequences for another area of reform. Joanne Weiss from the U.S. Department of Education explained that when deciding which states will receive awards from the \$4.35 billion Race to the Top competitive grant program, the Department will be watching for integrated plans that address all four of the reform areas. Therefore, states must work in concert on improving standards and assessments, increasing teacher effectiveness, providing support for low-performing schools, and strengthening data quality.
- 2. Collaboration is the key to fast, efficient reform.** Despite the additional funding from the federal government, many of these reforms are quite costly. By collaborating with other states, such as through the Common Core State Standards Initiative, governors can pool their resources for efficient and effective outcomes. Additionally, by collaborating with states that have made progress in different areas, governors can achieve more immediate results by forgoing some of the costly, time-consuming initial research phases and focus on ways to adapt other state's models to fit their own circumstances.
- 3. Political courage will be necessary.** This point was made repeatedly by governors and Secretary Duncan throughout the *Symposium*. Many, if not most, of these reforms will face political pushback from one constituency or another. Governors must be ready with solid facts and research to back up their reform agendas. The returns in achievement will take longer for some reforms than others, and in the case of raising standards, many states will face a perceived decline in student achievement before they see an improvement. Moving forward on the assurances will not be easy, and the leadership of strong, education governors will be essential to push forward bold reform.

"There is room for monumental educational growth across the nation, and our governors play a crucial role. We must focus our energy and efforts on systemic education reform, but the job isn't an easy one. We must be fearless as we move forward, all the while considering the future of our children and our nation."

— Jim Hunt, Hunt Institute



¹ Schmidt, W. (2005). *The Role of Curriculum*. American Educator 23.4. (Fall 2005).

² Berman, I. (2009). *Standards and Assessments*. From a briefing prepared for the 2009 Governors Education Symposium. (Durham, NC: James B. Hunt, Jr. Institute for Educational Leadership and Policy and the NGA Center for Best Practices.) Available: http://www.hunt-institute.org/elements/media/event-materials/GESBriefs_final.pdf.

³ Council of Chief State School Officers and National Governors Association. (2009). *Common Core State Standards Initiative Frequently Asked Questions*. Available: <http://www.corestandards.org/FAQ.htm>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Berman, I. (2009).

⁶ Toch, T. (2006). *Margins of Error: The Education Testing Industry in the No Child Left Behind Era*. (Washington, DC: Education Sector.) Available: http://www.educationsector.org/usr_doc/Margins_of_Error.pdf.

⁷ American Federation of Teachers. (2006). *Smart Testing: Let's Get it Right*. (Washington, DC: Author.)

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